



# The appliance of science

**Avid Volvere** £2000 **SME V** arm £1615

**Dynavector D17 D2 II** cartridge £495

**For** Control and resolution; superlative build and finish

**Against** Lacks rhythmic precision

**Verdict** If that sci-fi look appeals and you're after CD-quality performance rather than warmth, the Volvere deserves your attention

Starting a new hi-fi company is hard at the best of times but to specialise in high-end turntables might seem just plain daft. However, that's exactly what AVID's founder Conrad Mas did in early 1996. Five years on the company is prospering, with the demand for its £5000 Acutus turntable outstripping supply.

The Volvere is an attempt to bring the quality of the high-end deck to a lower price point: just place the two products side by side and the family resemblance is unmistakable.

Sure, there's been some cost-cutting to make the junior deck a more viable commercial proposition. The baseboard, platter and suspension have all been simplified, and the complex locking record-clamp of the Acutus has been discarded for a conventional – though beautifully made – alternative.

Everything is designed so that any vibrational energy at the stylus tip is dissipated down the bearing and into the subchassis. To this end, the record is firmly clamped to the bearing, and the cork mat has been chosen for its ability to absorb vibrations.

This Volvere is a simple deck to set-up, with easy adjustments to allow you to level the base and suspension, the latter being a clever design that maintains the correct spring rate throughout its range of adjustment. The result is a suspension that should bounce evenly, no matter what type of arm is fitted.

Our review sample came supplied with SME's legendary Series V arm and Dynavector's equally respected D17 D2 II cartridge, as AVID doesn't make either component at present.

There can be no questioning the fine build and finish of this turntable, but its performance will polarise opinion. Those who love vinyl because of its warmth and fluidity will hate the Volvere: it's a resolution fiend, presenting detail in a cool, dispassionate manner. There's no excess richness in the bass to make records sound 'nicer', nor does this deck round off any dynamics excesses to make the music sound more palatable.

The result is a very analytical sound that reproduces even such powerful piano pieces as Schubert's 'Piano Sonata in B flat' in a dry and controlled manner. Dynamics are strong, and the solidity behind the Volvere's delivery brings the musician's technique to the fore.

The lowest frequencies are held in an iron grip that's a world away from the soft and blurred bass that most of its rivals dish out. This makes it particularly easy to appreciate the decay of the lowest piano



notes in this recording and so make the whole piece that much more convincing.

The Volvere's combination of composure, resolution and control works well on all types of music. Wyclef Jean's 'It Doesn't Matter' thunders along at a breakneck pace without losing track of the details, while Jill Scott's debut set impresses with a focused and precise midrange.

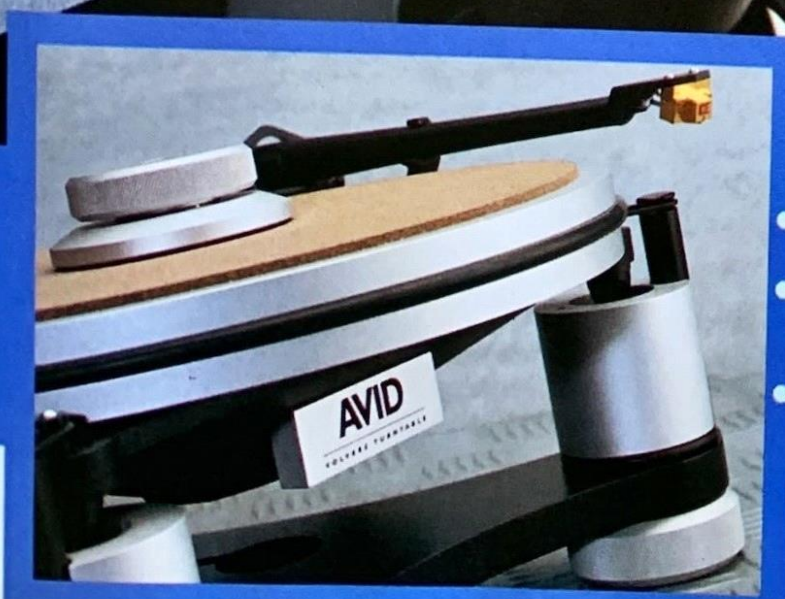
Despite its strengths there are a few chinks in the Volvere's impressive armour. Firstly, it doesn't convey rhythms with the precision that's offered by the best at this price, and this affects its ability to engage the senses. Soundstaging may be of the 'locked in position' variety but it could also do with being a little more spacious.

There are also a couple of operational quirks to report. The record clamp is intended to be screwed down tightly for the best results, but when this is done it damages the record label which is annoying. Also, some sort of dust cover would be appreciated, if only to stop the platter from getting dirty.

Overall, the Volvere is a fine turntable that offers many of the acknowledged attributes of CD, such as taut low frequencies and an excellent dynamic range. But in doing so, it also dilutes some of the very strengths that people love about vinyl records. There's no doubt about the build quality of this deck, but the sound lacks warmth and emotion.

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION <i>SAV'S</i>	
sound	★★★★☆
build	★★★★★
facilities	★★★☆☆
verdict	★★★★☆

AVID's Volvere turntable will divide hi-fi lovers. While it offers many of the strengths of CD and is intended to bring big-brother Acutus' high-end quality to a lower price-range, vinyl-lovers may not go for its dispassionate, analytical style



**DID YOU KNOW?**

- The name AVID is not an adjective but an acronym. The initials stand for A Very Interesting Design.
- The company may be coming up for its sixth birthday, but the original development work on turntables started 24 years ago.
- AVID's office cat weighs in at 10kg and is used for testing turntable suspensions!